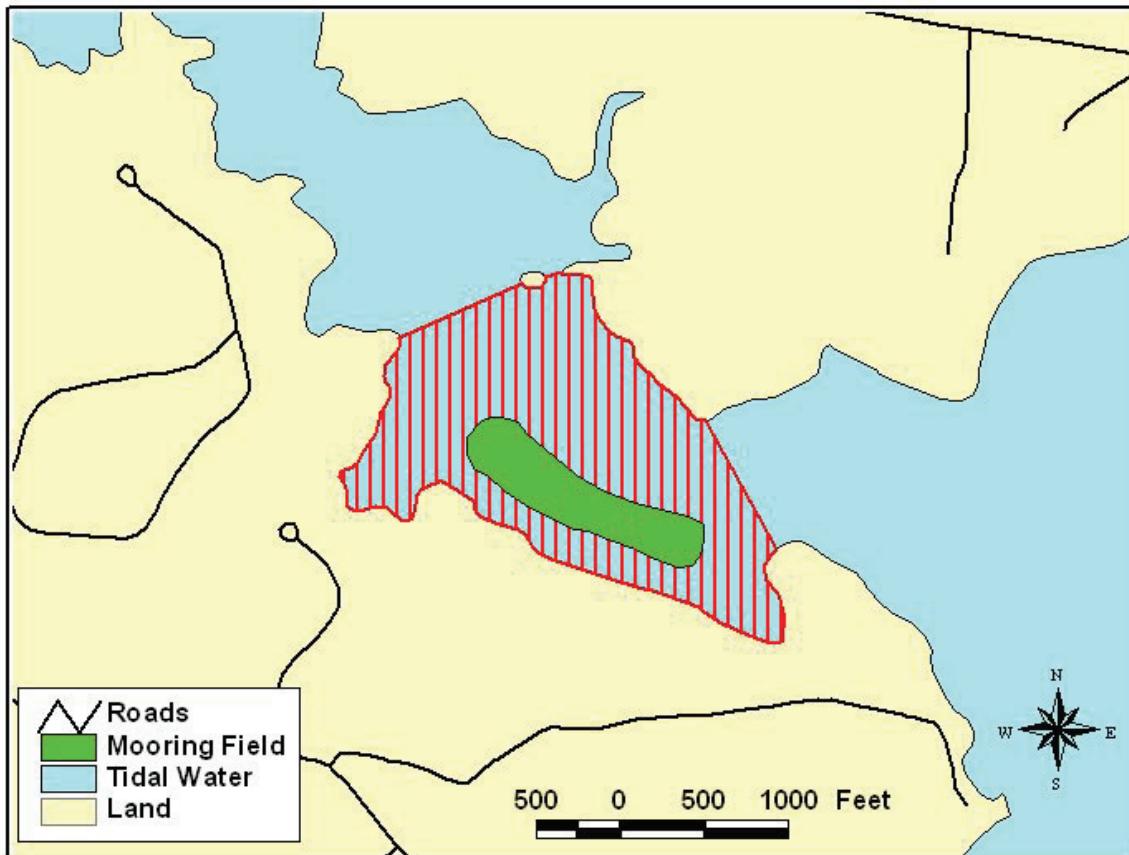


Boating and Shellfish Bed Closures:

What's the Connection?



The red hatched area is closed to shellfish harvesting.
This closure is sized to provide enough water to adequately dilute illegally dumped human waste from within the mooring field.

For more information on the "No Discharge Area," contact:
NH Dept. of Environmental Services
Clean Vessel Act Program
29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95
Concord, NH 03302-0095
(603) 271-8803
www.des.nh.gov/wmb/cva

Project Partners



Your boat could be causing restrictions on shellfish harvest in New Hampshire's tidal waters. Learn how you can help prevent shellfish bed closures.

Why do marinas and mooring fields pose a problem to shellfish harvest?

Boating and shellfish harvesting are just two of the many recreational activities supported by New Hampshire's tidal waters. Unfortunately, these activities are not always compatible, as **too many boats in one area can lead to MANDATORY shellfish harvesting restrictions.**

Larger boats equipped with on-board toilet systems (marine sanitation devices, MSDs) or portable toilets, have the potential of discharging their contents overboard. Any disease-causing bacteria or viruses in human waste from boats can be ingested by filter-feeding shellfish. These pathogens may not harm the shellfish, but if improperly cooked or eaten raw, the shellfish may transmit the disease to people.

Although most boat owners are mindful of the need to protect our tidal waters, some are unaware of existing laws, while others simply disregard laws prohibiting human waste discharge. Thus, the **mere presence** of boats represents risk of contamination that must be evaluated. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) Shellfish Program follows a set of guidelines known as the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) for evaluating boat sewage risk to determine if waters are suitable for shellfish harvesting. The guidelines require that all marinas and

mooring fields be assessed for potential risk of sewage discharge and contamination of surrounding shellfish growing areas.

How is pollution risk assessed by the state?

DES visually counts the number of boats in a particular marina or mooring field, and may collect additional data such as actual occupancy rates, and then:

- Determines how many boats may have toilet facilities.
- Determines how many might be discharging at any one time.
- Calculates how much water is needed to dilute the estimated sewage discharge.

This volume is then used to determine how large of an area is at risk.



What happens to an “at risk” area?

The area is closed to shellfish harvest.

- Boundaries are established utilizing easily visible landmarks to enable recognition by harvesters and for enforcement by NH Fish and Game conservation officers.
- The closure may be permanent or seasonal depending on resource abundance and/or the length of time that vessels are in the water.

How can YOU help keep areas open to harvest and still boat?

You can help keep areas open by:

- Using on-shore pumpout stations* or the DES mobile pumpout boat.
- Complying with the provisions of the “No Discharge Area.”
- Having your boat inspected yearly.

* For a list and map: www.des.nh.gov/wmb/cva.

New Hampshire received a “No Discharge Area” designation for state coastal waters from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in September 2005. Boaters can no longer discharge any waste (treated or untreated) within state jurisdictional waters, which extend three miles offshore. Boats operating in New Hampshire coastal waters are now required to secure overboard discharge capability. For examples visit www.des.nh.gov/wmb/cva.

As an added measure of safety, boaters can contact the DES Shellfish Program, the NH Power Squadron, or the Coast Guard Auxiliary and schedule an inspection of their boat. The inspection (and short questionnaire) will examine the type of MSD on the vessel, and determine if the risk of an overboard discharge is present.

The DES Shellfish Program can use such information to reduce the estimates of boats that may be discharging, which in turn can potentially reduce the size of a closure affecting adjacent shellfish harvesting areas.

Contact Information

Overboard Discharge Inspections

Matthew A. Wood
NH Dept. of Environmental Services
Shellfish Program
(603) 559-1508
Matthew.Wood@des.nh.gov

Safety Check & Overboard Discharge Inspections

Lee Chasse
Portsmouth Power Squadron
(603) 330-0984
chassel@metrocast.net

Vincent Riviezzo
Coast Guard Auxiliary
(603) 343-1080
riviezzo2@comcast.net

DES Mobile Pumpout Boat
Portsmouth Harbor Towing
(603) 670-5130
VHF: Channel 9